Approved For Release 2009/12/04 : CIA-RDP88B00443R001604200089-5

Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

DDA Registry
84-1723

02 JUL 1984

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing you to express my deep concern that the ongoing review of Federal retirement systems and some of the proposed modifications to these systems will seriously impair our efforts to revitalize and enhance the effectiveness of our foreign intelligence effort.

The Agency has a unique mission requiring special people who are willing to work in a strange and demanding environment. That uniqueness was recognized by Congress back in 1947 when it created CIA and blessed CIA with unique authorities. It again recognized that uniqueness when it passed into law the CIA's retirement system, which at that time was unique in government. If anything, the needs and requirements on the Agency have increased since then, placing great demands on our ability to recruit and retain a vigorous work force.

A good number of our employees, because they must work and live under cover, are at a disadvantage when they retire because they must maintain the history of their cover even when no longer employed. That fact prohibits them from freely discussing their work experience. This, of course, is compounded by the fact that during their careers, a great number of our employees must undertake, for operational reasons, directed assignments to hazardous areas of the world where health as well as personal and family safety is threatened.

Our uniqueness is also a burden to personal freedom, in the sense that our employees are not free to undertake speaking engagements, write books or articles, accept part-time employment or travel overseas without prior approval and certain constraints. Furthermore, unlike most other government employees, Agency employees are subject to the polygraph upon entrance on duty and periodically throughout their careers. Because of cover constraints our employees are not free to participate in all insurance plans, such as the Health Benefit Program, offered to other Federal employees. Needless to say, the burdens and limitations of employment which a CIA employee faces is unmatched elsewhere in the Federal sector.

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Because of the uniqueness of our mission, we must employ personnel with highly sought-after skills, from aerospace engineers to economists to computer engineers to scientists to medical doctors. If our benefit package, particularly our retirement system, does not remain fully competitive, we will not be able to hire employees who will permit us to provide this nation with the best in foreign intelligence.

I am sufficiently concerned about the current efforts under way to modify Federal retirement systems to have asked our Director of Personnel to thoroughly review all options to ensure that we are taking the proper steps to protect our present retirement benefits. Based upon the conditions of employment we must demand, I see no alternative at this time but to continue to have CIA employees retire at younger ages than elsewhere in the Federal government at large. Thus, as changes to the Federal retirement systems are considered by the current Administration and passed by the Congress, I ask for your support and assurance that the CIA's special needs be fully recognized in the final Federal retirement package prepared for Congressional action.

You know I fully support your efforts to reduce the cost of government and would not ask for your assistance unless I truly believed the CIA mission required special consideration. The CIA retirement system must be given special consideration and I ask that you support our position with David Stockman.

Respectfully yours,

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

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